22. (New) A method for transferring a wafer into or from a thermal treatment chamber, said treatment chamber comprising a top section and bottom section between which the wafer is accommodated during treatment, said treatment chamber being associated with a thermal treatment installation which comprises a loading chamber, which has a temperature differing from a temperature of said thermal treatment chamber, loading means and transport means being provided therefor in the loading chamber, wherein in the loading chamber one of a set of wafers and a ring are combined to a wafer/ring combination by the loading means and wafer/ring combinations are inserted into and withdrawn from the thermal treatment chamber by the transport means, wherein said thermal treatment chamber is embodied for treating one wafer at a time and wherein wafer/ring combinations are individually inserted in between and withdrawn from in between the top and bottom section of the thermal treatment chamber.

23. (New) The method of Claim 22, wherein both sides of a wafer are directly adjacent to said top section and bottom section.

24. (New) The method of Claim 22, wherein during transfer of the wafer treatment/ring combination a reactor temperature is at least 900° C.

25. (New) The method of Claim 22, wherein during movement of the wafer/ring combination the ring is handled mechanically and the wafer bears on support points on said ring.

26. (New) The method of Claim 22, wherein during movement the ring and the wafer are supported by an auxiliary element, which auxiliary element is handled mechanically.

27. (New) The method of Claim 26, wherein vacuum is used in the transport means on a contact surface between the wafer and the auxiliary element in order to hold the wafer in place.

28. (New) The method of Claim 22, wherein in said thermal treatment installation the wafer surrounded by the ring is at a distance of less than 1 mm away from, or in contact with, a horizontal and essentially flat heated reactor section in said thermal treatment installation by vertical movement of the wafer with respect to the heated reactor section.

29. (New) The method of Claim 22, wherein the essentially horizontal wafer is moved a vertical distance away from the ring in said thermal treatment chamber.

30. (New) The method of Claim 29, wherein contact-free treatment of the wafer takes place in said thermal treatment chamber, the wafer being moved by a gas stream a vertical distance away from the ring.

31. (New) The method of Claim 22, wherein the thermal treatment installation comprises a transport chamber which is connected to the loading chamber and to the thermal treatment chamber.

32. (New) The method of Claim 31, wherein the wafer is surrounded, without contact, by the ring in said transport means.

33. (New) The method of Claim 32, wherein the wafer is a vertically spaced from support points of the ring by a gas stream.

34. (New) A thermal treatment installation/ring combination comprising a loading chamber, loading means, transport means and a thermal treatment chamber for carrying out a thermal treatment, said thermal treatment chamber comprising a top section and a bottom section located opposite to each other and between which a wafer can be accommodated for carrying out a thermal treatment, said transport means being equipped to move wafer/ring combinations from the loading chamber into the thermal treatment chamber and vice versa, wherein said thermal treatment chamber is configured to carry out a thermal treatment on one wafer at a time, said transport means being equipped to move individual wafer/ring combinations from the loading chamber and insert said individual wafer/ring combination into the thermal treatment chamber and vice versa, wherein the thermal treatment chamber is configured to accommodate said ring surrounding the wafer.

35. (New) The thermal treatment/ring combination of Claim 34, wherein said top section and bottom section are provided with heating means.

36. (New) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 34, wherein an internal diameter of an inner edge of the ring is larger than an external diameter of the wafer.

37. (New) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 34, wherein the ring is configured to support said wafer at least during transfer.

38. (New) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 37, wherein the ring is mechanically joined to the transport means.

39. (New) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 34, wherein the treatment chamber is configured to accommodate an auxiliary element for supporting the ring and the wafer at least during transfer.

40. (New) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 39, wherein said auxiliary element is mechanically joined to the transport means.

41. (New) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 34, wherein said ring is provided with heating means.

42. (New) A thermal treatment installation/ring combination, wherein a thermal treatment installation comprises a treatment chamber delimited by two opposite sections, at least one of said sections being provided with a gas supply for positioning a wafer floating between said sections, said ring configured to be placed between said sections, wherein in an operating position a distance between said two sections at a location of said ring substantially corresponds to a thickness of said ring, and wherein at least three radial gas passages are arranged between said ring and at least one section.

43. (New) The thermal treatment installation/ring combination of Claim 42, wherein said passages are provided in said sections.

44. (New) A ring combination comprising a ring and a support ring, an internal diameter of which is larger than an external diameter of the ring and which is provided with support elements which extend within an inner circumference of said ring.

45. (New) The ring combination of Claim 44, wherein said support elements comprise pins which are accommodated in grooves.

46. (New) The ring combination of Claim 45, wherein said support elements are provided with internal channels which at one end open onto a contact surface with the wafer and at another end are in communication with an internal channel in the support ring, which channel is connected to vacuum means in order to produce a vacuum in the channels.

47. (New) A method for transferring a wafer between a thermal treatment chamber and a thermal treatment installation, said treatment chamber comprising a top section and bottom section between which the wafer is accommodated during treatment, said thermal treatment installation comprising a loading chamber having loading means and transport means, said method comprising:

placing a wafer on a wafer support while in the loading chamber, wherein the wafer support is configured as a ring having support elements to support the wafer;

inserting the wafer support loaded with the wafer into the thermal treatment chamber so that the wafer and the wafer support are positioned between the top section and the bottom section;

individually processing the wafer in the thermal treatment chamber; and